

BRIEFS

LA. YOUTH LEADER DIES ON KENYA MISSION TRIP

NAKARU, Kenya (BP) — Emily Martin, 21, youth leader at Hebron Church in Bush, La., died Jan. 1 from a blood clot in her lungs shortly after arriving in Kenya on her third mission trip to the African nation. Her father Scot Martin told the Baptist Message, news journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, that even before her first visit to Kenya, Emily possessed a love for missions that began as a teenager with a church evangelistic trip to Oklahoma. A student at Leavelle College of New Orleans Seminary, she likely would have moved to Kenya to continue mission work after graduation, Scot Martin said.

CA. TO ALLOW TRAINING IN ABORTION REVERSAL

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP) — The California Board of Registered Nursing has given a green light to a class teaching nurses how to reverse drug-induced abortions. The abortion pill reversal process uses injections of progesterone to counteract mifepristone, the first part of a two-drug process used to induce abortion. More than 400 women have called the Abortion Pill Reversal hotline before taking the second drug and successfully reversed their abortions, according to Heartbeat International, the Ohio-based nonprofit organization that offers the continuing education credit.

GROWING PROBLEMS TO BE DISCUSSED AT FORUM

DALLAS (BP) — Cybersecurity and sexual abuse in the church will be among the topics discussed by key ministry decision makers, human resources professionals, and financial officers of churches and ministries during the GuideStone Financial Resources second annual Employee Benefits Summit March 26-28 at the Westin Galleria in Dallas. The summit is an outgrowth of the merger last year of the Southern Baptist Business Officers Conference and GuideStone Benefits Forum.

YOUTH EVANGELISM CHALLENGE



PREPARED TO PRAISE — Mississippi Baptist young people converged on A.E. Wood Coliseum on the Mississippi College campus in Clinton Dec. 27-28 for the annual Youth Evangelism Challenge sponsored by the evangelism department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Bible study, evangelism emphasized

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

More than 850 young people from across the state attended the 2017 Youth Evangelism Challenge (YEC) Dec. 27-28 on the campus of Mississippi Col-

lege (MC) in Clinton, according to organizers.

A time of Bible study and training for evangelism encounters in their daily lives, the annual gathering in MC's A.E. Wood Coliseum drew good numbers but was down slightly from the previous year, said

event coordinator Don Lum, director of evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson.

A total of 46 public professions of faith in Jesus Christ were recorded, he noted.

see YEC on p. 6

U.S. Supreme Court won't hear HB 1523

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The U.S. Supreme Court has turned down a bid to overturn HB 1523, the common name for the state law that grants Mississippians the right to personally decline to provide government and business services based on their sincere religious beliefs.

"Two years ago Mississippi passed one of the strongest religious freedom laws in the country. I was pleased to read [Jan. 8] that the United States Supreme Court refused to intervene, allowing our law to remain in full effect. Congratulations to Gov. Phil Bryant and his legal team," said Republican state Rep. Andy Gipson of Braxton, who was one of the

sponsors of HB 1523 and serves as pastor of Gum Springs Church in Simpson County, in an interview with the Clarion Ledger newspaper in Jackson.

Formally known as the Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act, HB 1523 allows citizens of Mississippi to cite their sincerely-held religious beliefs in declining to become involved in such activities as same sex marriages and other LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) matters.

For example, under HB 1523 a county clerk can refuse to issue a marriage license to a pair of lesbians if the clerk holds sincere religious beliefs opposing such marriages — but the clerk must have some-

one on standby who is willing to officially issue the license. Owners of ancillary marriage services such as photography, flowers, and cake baking can also decline to provide their business services.

Opponents complain the law will inflict widespread discrimination on LGBTQ citizens of the state.

Jennifer Riley Collins, executive director of the ACLU of Mississippi, said in a statement after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, "The ACLU of Mississippi expects that our narrower challenge will now move forward. Our case was filed on behalf of a same-sex couple planning to marry in Mississippi in the near future. We will continue to proceed

see HB 1523 on p. 6

Churches now eligible for federal relief funds

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has reversed itself after widespread complaints and will now permit churches whose facilities have been damaged by natural disasters to receive relief funds from the federal government.

"Private nonprofit houses of worship will not be singled out for disfavored treatment within the community centers subcategory of nonprofit applicants," FEMA Recovery Directorate Assistant Administrator Alex Amparo wrote in a Jan. 2 guide outlining the change in policy.

The guide defines, among other matters, the types of nonprofit organizations eligible to receive funding as "community centers" under the federal Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

In the wake of damage to Texas churches caused by Hurricane Harvey in August, Republican U.S. President Donald Trump and Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott urged FEMA to make houses of worship eligible to receive the same type of disaster relief funds available to other nonprofits.

see FUNDS on p. 7

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Dear Legislator ...

The 2018 regular session of the Mississippi Legislature is upon us. As anyone knows who even casually tracks the annual three-month sessions of the Legislature, many bills are introduced but relatively few make it into law. The complex set of checks and balances both inside the legislative process and in the broader branches of state government have a tendency to winnow the hundreds and hundreds of bills that are filed and prefiled for each session.

Legislators have to absorb their share of criticism, cynicism, and caricature during their time under the venerable domes of the New Capitol in downtown Jackson. Some of the ridicule showered on them is likely deserved (by some of them, anyway), but a fair amount is not deserved. They are, after all, our fellow Mississippians.

For every citizen who couldn't find their way to either chamber in the Capitol but feels free to regularly slam legislators, there are at least a few of us who realize that most legislators are well-meaning people who must put aside their families, businesses, and community activities for one-quarter of each year to come to Jackson for the session.

That's no small sacrifice, so it would behoove us to occasionally tell them how much we appreciate the effort even as we loudly complain about what we perceive they are doing or not doing.

The Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) has some helpful hints on how to make contact with legislators, how to get a point across without dooming favored legislation, and how to follow up on the progress of important measures:

■ The best communicating is done face-to-face. Make an appointment and be on time. Bring an outline of the one or two main issues you want to discuss. Be brief, recommend specific solutions, and leave a written summary of your important points.

It's fair to ask the legislator for his/her position on the bills in which you are interested. Don't take it personally if the legislator disagrees with your position. Rather than argue, discuss differences in a pleasant manner.

■ If a personal visit is not possible, write your legislator. Writ-

ing can save a legislator's time (a plus in your favor) and provides a record of your position on proposed legislation. Include your full name, address, and telephone number. The address for legislators while in session is P.O. Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215-1018. Individual e-mail addresses can be accessed at legislature.ms.gov.

■ Do your research. Know the bills about which you are writing, and include any specific information you have such as the bill number and details. Bill status can be attained by calling (601) 359-3360 for the House of Representatives, and (601) 359-3229 for the Senate. These numbers are valid only while the legislature is in session. The web site is legislature.ms.gov.

■ Telephone calls do not substitute for personal visits and letters. However, when telephoning legislators make efficient use of your time with them. Identify yourself and the bills you are for or against (again, one or two main issues is a good limit). Explain your reasoning and let them know how you want them to vote.

The telephone number for legislators while they are in session is (601) 359-3770. Just as with personal visits and letters, end the conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

■ Citizens can request to testify before committees about bills they strongly support or oppose. Find out the name of the appropriate committee chairman and contact him/her as soon as possible. If given the opportunity to testify, get to the point quickly and be prepared to answer any questions legislators may have about your position.

The CAC, a ministry funded by the Mississippi Cooperative Program, stands ready to assist Mississippi Baptists who want to get involved in this grand process of self-governance we enjoy in our state and nation. CAC can be reached at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. E-mail: rmccollum@christianaction.com. Web site: Christianaction.com.

Take time to get involved, or else just be content with whatever comes out of the legislative pipeline. Those are really our only two choices.

To join, or not?

Setting the issue of local church membership requires understanding the biblical concept of a local church, embracing the types of covenants that existed between early believers, accepting that New Testament church members knew who was and was not part of their group, and recognizing a believer's Kingdom-citizen responsibilities.

Only biblical notions of membership that emerge from scriptural accounts and teachings about local churches should remain.

Notice the difference between the concepts of the "universal church" and a "local church." The universal church consists of every born-again believer, from every place, throughout all of time (Matt. 16:18, Eph. 3:10, Col. 1:18). It has never held a meeting and will only do so at the marriage supper of the Lamb described in Rev. chapter 21.

However, Scripture primarily refers to the church (Greek: *ekklesia*) as local believer fellowships or groups of believer fellowships in a particular area. Such references especially appear in Scripture passages containing instruction or teaching (Rom. 16:1, 1 Cor. 11:18, and Jesus' letters to the churches in Rev. chapters two and three).

Church is a both/and idea. Christians are both part of the universal church and should be part of a local church. All believers are brothers and sisters, and will gather together at the end of the ages but for now, each born-again believer should enter into a covenant relationship with a particular local church.

Individual believers in a local church seriously agree (covenant) to engage in certain practices, such as participation and using their gifts to serve the congregation. In response, the other believers together as a group seriously agree (covenant) to engage in complementary practices such as guiding, teaching, and gently disciplining the individual.

The two-way practice of covenant agreements forms the foundation of church membership. Living out those covenants requires local church membership. Because covenants form the core of church membership, no one should casually join a church nor should churches casually receive individuals into their membership.



Guest opinion

with Bill Connors

Is this idea biblical? Granted, the New Testament nowhere explicitly instructs local churches to maintain formal, organized membership records but the lack of an explicit command does not render modern notions of church membership unbiblical.

The Apostle Paul said, "...You are the body of Christ, and individual members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27, Rom. chapter 12). He compared a local church to the human body, attributing an organic quality to its structure. Just as a body cannot exist without its individual parts, a local church cannot exist without its parts (i.e., members — its covenanted believers).

Likewise, just as every body part belongs to a particular body, so each believer should belong to a particular believer fellowship: a church. Nonbelievers do not belong to a believer fellowship. They are not part of the body Paul describes.

Today, people are members of all sorts of things. They hold membership in clubs that are bound together only by common interests or activities in which participation is optional. By paying dues, they can become members of service-providing organizations and receive certain perks and privileges (e.g., warehouse stores). These examples of membership all differ from the covenants that bound New Testament believers together in local churches.

Rather than seeing a local church as a club, store or political party, Christians should view the local church as an earthly embassy of God's Kingdom. Believers have changed their citizenship. They are residents of God's Kingdom who cooperate together to represent that Kingdom's interests where they live.

see CONNORS on p. 6

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GuideStone nears century of service on high note

DALLAS (BP and local reports) — GuideStone Financial Resources, an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention that offers a variety of financial programs to Southern Baptists and others, is entering its 2018 centennial following a year marked by continued recognition for its retirement investment performance and record support for retired ministers and their widows facing financial struggles.

Also during 2017, the Southern Baptist entity saw court-related advances for the sanctity of life, but a new court challenge over the minister's housing allowance was also encountered.

GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins had declared 2017 as the "Year of Innovation" in his annual tradition of designating a theme since becoming GuideStone's president 20 years ago. Each year's theme focuses on a Scripture passage and helps guide the organization's work as it seeks to serve its 250,000 participants.

"We want to achieve a culture of innovation at GuideStone so that we are able to meet the needs of our participants today and anticipate the needs of our participants as we seek to honor the Lord by being their lifelong partner in enhancing their financial security," Hawkins said at the time.

In pronouncing the 2017 theme last February, Hawkins drew from passages in Nehemiah in the Old Testament to describe how people of innovation must face up, team up, gird up and look up to achieve their goals.

Hawkins is slated to announce 2018's centennial theme to GuideStone trustees during their February meeting in Dallas.

Retirement investments

The GuideStone Funds Defensive Market Strategies Fund - Institutional Share Class was named the Best Fund Over 3 Years and Best Fund Over 5 Years by the Lipper financial data company within its Flexible Portfolio Funds category for the year ending Dec. 31, 2016.

This award recognized the Defensive Market Strategies Fund within a category encompassing 442 similar funds in the three-year period and 335 similar funds in the five-year period.

The recognition marked the seventh and eighth times in six years that GuideStone has received one of the prestigious Lipper Fund Awards for consistently strong risk-adjusted performance relative to its peers.

The accolades were announced at an investment industry awards dinner March 23 in New York City.

GuideStone's Defensive Market Strategies Fund offers



A BIG HELP — After 45 years of ministry, Reginald and Claudia Pressley say they "never had much money to put away for retirement, though the churches helped where they could." The Pressleys are among more than 1,800 individuals aided by Mission:Dignity, the retiree benevolence ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources that set a new fundraising record in 2017. (BP photo)



We strive for excellence in all we do for God's glory and for the benefit of our participants."

O.S. Hawkins
GuideStone President

a lower-volatility option that aims to deliver equity-like returns at reduced risk when compared to the S&P 500 Index. The fund is designed to participate in the return potential of stocks over time but at lower risk levels than a traditional stock portfolio.

"We are humbled and energized by these awards," Hawkins said, noting, "As we develop our investment products, we want to ensure that they always reflect the values of the pastors and other church and ministry workers we serve while not sacrificing performance."

We strive for excellence in all we do for God's glory and for the benefit of our participants."

Mission:Dignity

Mission:Dignity, the GuideStone ministry that provides financial assistance to retired Southern Baptist pastors and their widows living near the poverty line, had its largest-ever fundraising year, receiving more than \$7.5 million and paying out a similar amount.

Under Mission:Dignity, qualified couples and widows/widowers at poverty level income levels with at least 25 years of paid Southern Baptist service can receive up to \$600 each month.

"Mission:Dignity is a testimony to the faithfulness of GuideStone to our founder, William Lunsford, and his vision when we were established in 1918," Hawkins said. "Dr. Lunsford promised those faithful saints that we would 'comfort you in your declining years.' Through Mission:Dignity, we're living out that purpose."

To help celebrate GuideStone's centennial, Mission:Dignity launched the 100 Reasons to Give initiative during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting last summer in Phoenix and will continue through 2018 to encourage donors to make a legacy gift to support God's servants.

Code series

Hawkins' authorship skills have also been a stirring success for Mission:Dignity. His Code series of books include The Joshua Code, The Jesus Code, The James Code, and The Daniel Code and has sold more than one million books with all author royalties benefitting Mission:Dignity.

In 2017, nearly one-half million copies of The Christmas Code alone were sold, many to churches that used them as giveaways for evangelism initiatives.

Reports continue to come in from churches nationwide that have used it and recorded numerous Gospel conversations, first-time visitors drawn in by the book giveaways, and families blessed by its easy-to-use devotional nature during the Advent season.

"We are so thankful for how God is using these books to help people grow in their faith, and for churches and individuals who are able to use them to share the Gospel with their friends and family," Hawkins said. "It's a joy to hear these reports and to know that all of our proceeds benefit Mission:Dignity."

Contraceptive mandate

The U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed an appeal Oct. 23 filed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) during the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, in the contraceptive case filed by GuideStone in 2012.

HHS had filed a voluntary motion to dismiss its appeal in GuideStone's litigation against the contraceptive mandate after the Trump administration announced it was publishing a new interim final rule that respected the religious convictions of employers providing health care plans.

The dismissal of the appeal sends GuideStone's litigation back to the federal district court in Oklahoma where the case was initially filed.

In light of the contentious nature of groups that have vowed to challenge the new interim final rule, GuideStone will continue to press for additional and lasting judicial relief to protect its health plan and the religious employers it serves from further government entanglement.

Housing allowance

A federal district court judge in Wisconsin entered a final order Dec. 13, declaring the minister's housing allowance unconstitutional. The ruling was stayed for 180 days after all appeals are exhausted, meaning it currently does not have any impact. Observers expect the government will appeal the order.

The minister's housing allowance exclusion allows churches to designate part of eligible ministers' income as a tax-free housing allowance. The challenge specifically applies to the cash housing allowance. The part of the tax law that provides for tax-free use of a parsonage or other church-owned home is not impacted.

"We have monitored these challenges closely and will be prepared to provide amicus briefs at the appropriate time," Hawkins said. "We believe the housing allowance law as it currently exists removes government-imposed favor and allows churches to determine whether a church-owned home or providing a cash allowance is the best way for a church to provide for its minister's needs. We look forward to advocating on behalf of all pastors along with other denominational pension boards and with our Southern Baptist partners."

Church safety/security

GuideStone offered two church safety and security seminars in November, scheduled before the horrific church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, on Nov. 5.

Looking to future

Hawkins reported that as GuideStone celebrates its centennial anniversary in 2018, the entity gives thanks to the Lord for His blessings on the ministry founded in 1918 in the heart of William Lunsford, a Nashville pastor who acted on a vision to help "old soldiers of the cross."

"It is our hope and prayer that as we enter this second century of service those who come after us will find us fitting heirs to the vision Lunsford established those years ago," Hawkins said.

Several years ago a woman who is a member of one of our churches lost her husband. Some time after he had passed away and all the funeral had taken place and life had returned somewhat to normal, a fellow church member asked her if she still had that old truck her husband drove. Yes, she said. She told him they had put it in the old shop just to keep it clean and preserve it. "Do you want to sell it?" asked the man. "I might," she said. "You can come by and look at it if you like."

Some days later as he was passing by her house he saw the old truck out there in the shed. He stopped and asked if he could just look at it. She said that would be fine. It was in mint condition. "How much do you want for this old truck?" he asked. "A thousand dollars," she replied. The guy didn't want to hurt her feelings but he said, "That's a little high. I would be willing to pay \$900 for this old truck." She agreed to the deal. He got the truck. She had \$900.

He was thrilled and later was chatting with some friends about the old truck and how he had talked the widow down \$100 and paid \$900 for it. One of the friends asked, "Well, what are you going to do with it?" He replied, "I'm probably going to sell it." His friend asked, "How much do you want for it?" He said, "\$2,500," as he folded his arms in a gesture of confidence. "What?" his friend exclaimed. "You just said you paid \$900 for it and now you want \$2,500? How do you figure?" The man looked straight at him and said, "To tell you the truth, I think a lot more of the old truck now that it belongs to me. Since it's mine, I think it's worth over \$2,500."



How Much Are You Worth?

Interesting how we think things that belong to us are really valuable, when the truth is God looks at us that way. Because we are His, He really thinks we are valuable. In 1 Peter 2:9, Scripture relates that God's opinion of us is like this: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." What a ringing affirmation of the fact that when we come to know Christ as Savior, God thoroughly and gloriously affirms us. We are valuable because we are His.

Following this Christmas just past, I was listening to a financial assessment of the Christmas holidays and an evaluation of how much money Americans spent on presents and gifts. According to this financial assessment, billions and billions and billions of dollars were

spent for Christmas. I don't know how you can get your mind around billions and billions of dollars, but I do know it's a bunch. However, the fact is that if you literally took that money or all the things that money bought and stacked it around even one individual, it would not alter the true value and worth of that person — not one red cent.

Who we are and what we are is dependent upon and draws its value from our relationship with our wonderful Savior. Can I just point out to each one of us that we are worth more than others may think we are worth? We are worth a lot regardless of a poor evaluation someone else may give us. We are worth more than we may think.

I'm not talking about being arrogant about who you are or how much you're worth. Sometimes people spend so much time — negative, critical time — looking at

what they don't have and what they can't do that they feel like they are worth nothing. Wrong! You are worth everything that Jesus did in order to buy you, love you, forgive you, and present you holy to His Heavenly Father. You are worth more than you may think of yourself as worth.

In fact, you are worth more and are far more valuable than what anybody or everybody (except Jesus, our Lord) thinks or says about you. What are you worth? You're worth Jesus leaving heaven to come to earth. You're worth Jesus living in the ridicule and rejection He encountered during His thirty-plus years on earth. You're worth Jesus going to the cross and dying for every one of your sins. You're worth all God gave in His Son to save you, redeem you, and make you the treasure of His heart.

If anybody knows your worth, God knows. As His daughter or son — one of His children — He proclaims you incredibly, eternally valuable to Him. God loves you. He has provided everything for you in this world and the world to come, if you will trust Jesus His Son as your Savior. We're only days into the new year, but why not take this day to turn your eyes toward Jesus, put your faith in Him, and accept Him as your Lord and Master? You will find quickly and with certainty that Jesus thinks you are worth everything He did in order to give you life everlasting. Trust Him now. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

The author can be contacted at directions@mccb.org.

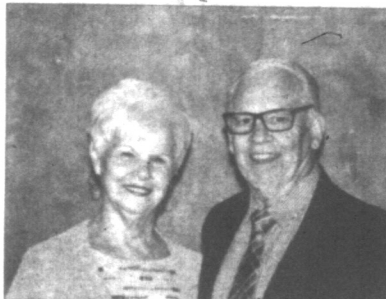
Staff Changes



HOPEWELL CHURCH, MCCOOL, has called Bobby Parish as pastor. He is shown with his wife Jo.



BECKER CHURCH, BECKER, has called Jason Green as pastor. He is coming from Starkville with his wife Magan and sons, Jayden and Micah.



Roger Smith has resigned from **BISSELL CHURCH, TUPELO**, after 56 years in ministry, the last 12 at Bissell. He will be available for supply or interim. He is shown with his wife Eleanor.



MT. OLIVE CHURCH, SMITHDALE, has called Eric Moak as pastor. Shown are Moak, daughters Malaine and Maddie, and wife Misty.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Liberty Church, Noxapater:** Revival, Jan. 14 - 17; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, speaker; Dennis Duran, music; Charles Rook, pastor.

MS POSITIONS

DREW BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR— Please email resume to drewbaptistchurch@gmail.com or U.S. mail to Drew Baptist Church, 139 S. Church St., Drew, MS 38737.

LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH FLOWOOD, MS IS LOOKING FOR A FULL-TIME CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MINISTER. Please email your resume to office@bclflowood.org.

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN BELMONT, MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR. We are members of the SBC and are seeking the man God has prepared to lead us in His will. Please submit resumes to cbcpastorapp@gmail.com.

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What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

January 11, 2018

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

IT'S 2018!



Time to apply for scholarships with the Mississippi Baptist Foundation!

Our policy, deadline, and applications have changed. Please visit our website to review the 2018 policy and submit an application before April 30.

Call us at 601.292.3210 or visit www.msbaptistfoundation.org for more info.

PASTOR/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

BIVOCATIONAL PASTORS – SAVE THE DATE

P/LD is excited to host Bivocational Pastors/Wives Dialogue Dinners in 2018! The purpose is to discuss new strategies for resourcing Bivo pastors throughout our state based on 2017 survey results.

Join us at one of the following locations:

- March 1 – Tupelo
- March 8 – Meridian
- March 22 – Gulfport
- April 5 – Hattiesburg
- April 12 – Flowood
- April 19 – Grenada

More information coming soon from the Pastor/Leadership Development Department.

2018 STATE SENIOR ADULT EVANGELISM RALLY

SHARING THE FAITH ON MY JOURNEY

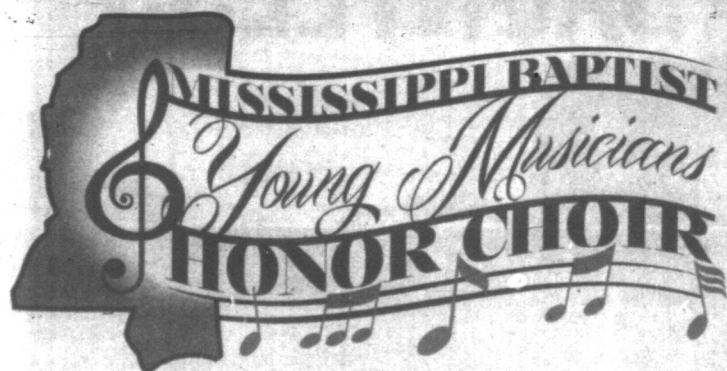
Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Brandon Baptist Church

Brandon, MS

8:00am – 11:45am

No registration needed. Contact the Discipleship & Family Ministry Department at 601-292-3284 or tpresson@mbcb.org for more information.



Young Musicians Honor Choir CONCERT

Saturday, April 21, 2018

6:30 p.m.

Brandon Baptist Church

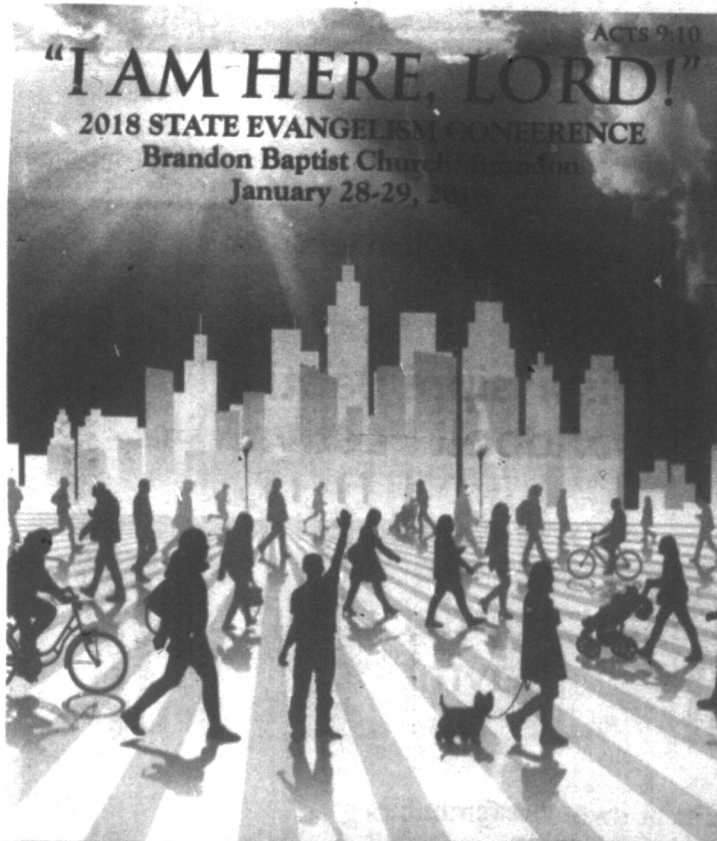
Contact the Church Music Department at 601-292-3267 for more information.



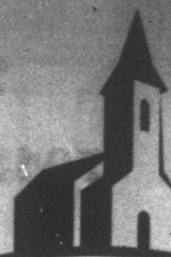
Witnessing Through Media Awards Competition Is Coming

- Entries in the Awards Competition must have been produced or aired between January 1, 2017 - January 1, 2018
- Award Entry Deadline is January 19, 2018
- Entry form and registration will be online soon

Contact Communication Services
1-800-748-1651, ext. 578 or 292-3378
or e-mail irichardson@mbcb.org



For more information about the event, please contact the Evangelism Department at 601-292-3278 or lbarris@mbcb.org



Small Church Youth Ministry Workshops

6:00 p.m. - 8:45 p.m. | Supper is served at 6:00 p.m.

January 18, 2018
Poplar Springs Baptist Church
Mendenhall, MS

February 22, 2018
LaBelle Haven Baptist Church
Olive Branch, MS

February 8, 2018
Carrollton Baptist Church
Carrollton, MS

March 1, 2018
First Baptist Church
Waynesboro, MS

February 15, 2018
First Baptist Church
Baldwyn, MS

For questions, contact Discipleship & Family Ministry at
601-292-3284 or visit
www.tinyurl.com/2018SmallChurch to register.



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Central Hills Baptist Retreat
Registration begins February 1, 2018
www.mbc.org/student-connect-camp

Session 1: June 4-7

Session 2: June 7-10

Session 3: June 12-15

Please contact Tony Martin at 601-292-3217
or tmartin@mbcb.org for further information.

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2018 Preaching Conference

"The Book of Joshua"

April 9 - Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain

April 10 - William Carey University, Hattiesburg

April 11 - Patterson Place, Garaywa Camp & Conference Center, Clinton

Details coming soon from Pastor/Leadership Development Department



SDA

2018

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Pray this day for...

January 12 - January 25, 2018

"praying at all times in the Spirit... To that end keep alert with perseverance, making supplication for all the saints..."

Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

Pray for: **Aaron & Tiffany Epps**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through general evangelism & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Shella Flowers**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through administration.

Pray for: **Clarence Frank & Phoebe Harrison**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples.

Pray for: **Kenneth & Kimberly Hatcock**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through student evangelism & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Earl & Ramona Hewitt**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through medicine & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Cindy DeMars**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Guy DeMars**, missionary ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through host "ad" coordination.

Pray for: **Cynthia Hodgins**, missionary ministering to Deaf Peoples through church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Jeffery & Lissa Holman**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Ronald & Beverly Holmes**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples through church planting & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Daniel & Claudia Hood**, missionaries ministering to North African and Middle Eastern Peoples through general evangelism & church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Millard Jones**, missionary ministering to European Peoples through student evangelism.

Pray for: **Susan Jones**, missionary ministering to East Asian Peoples through student evangelism.

Pray for: **Timothy & Rebecca Lightsey**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples through strategy coordination & church/home outreach evangelism.



Miss Carley
3/2/15
Parents: C & A
Restricted

Miss Lulie Adair
3/6/09
Parents: James & Mary Margaret
Sub-Saharan African Peoples

Miss Emma Grace Epps
3/17/03
Parents: Aaron & Tiffany
American Peoples Group

Miss Emma Worthy
3/28/03
Parents: Charlie & Shannon
European Peoples

To Be Sent February 23, 2018, by the WMU Office



PLEASE NOTE THE TIMING: Thank you for your love and support of MKs by sending Birthday cards! Because of the sending to other countries, there is a need to get cards sent a month ahead of birthday. As soon as the list is in the Baptist Record, please send the cards and not wait until a couple of weeks before the date of the birthday. It is posted two months ahead to give time to receive cards and then to mail them a month ahead of time to insure arrival around birthday. Again, thank you for being a blessing to so many with this ministry!

NOTE: Church members may send a package of cards together; cards do not have to be sent individually to the WMU. Individual cards do not need postage stamps when sent as a package to MS WMU.

FOR SECURITY: cards will be forwarded. Please send all to: MBCB WMU MK Birthdays, PO Box 530, Jackson MS 39205.

Please include your return address on each card envelope. MKs and their parents may wish to send you an update or note of appreciation.

MISSISSIPPI MISSIONS MOBILIZATION

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Make an eternal investment with your 2018 VBS Missions Offering.

Missions Mobilization of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board invites you to participate in the Home Building Project in Malaysia. For the 8th year in a row, we are collecting VBS offerings to build longhouses in Malaysia. Please consider setting a goal for your VBS to collect \$1,400 to provide a home for a family in Malaysia. The offerings received will purchase the building materials. Missions Mobilization will send the volunteer construction teams to provide the labor, alongside the Malaysian families.

In the past six years 608 decisions have been made for Christ and 371 homes have been built.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/MSLonghouse> for promo materials.
Contact Missions Mobilization at 601-292-3398 or cmunn@mbcb.org for more information.

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ASSISTANTS CONFERENCE
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WAR FAIR?

IN YOUR MINISTRY

More details coming from Pastor/Leadership Development at the end of the month!

HOUSE TOPS

LifeWay's Draper Tower now just a memory

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — Draper Tower, the tallest landmark on the former LifeWay Christian Resources campus in downtown Nashville, is now a pile of rubble.

The 12-story building was demolished Jan. 6 with an implosion the demolition team's leader said went "100% perfect." The Tennessean newspaper reported.

Following a series of loud bangs made by some 600 pounds of explosives, Draper Tower crumbled in sections to make room for a 380-unit residential building, two office buildings, and retail space — all part of the privately-developed Nashville Yards which will span the area that used to house LifeWay's nine-building campus.

LifeWay's corporate headquarters moved in November 2017 to a new 277,000-square-foot facil-

ity about a half-mile away from its former campus which was sold in 2015 for \$125 million.

Charles Willis, who retired from LifeWay's communications department in 2003 following a 35-year career there, told Baptist Press (BP) that Draper Tower will be remembered as a Nashville landmark. It was graced with unique 12-story stone crosses that ran the length and breadth of the building.

"People could see [Draper Tower] from the interstate and could find their way to the LifeWay campus just by keeping it in view even if they didn't know which street to turn on," Willis recalled.

The tower opened in 1991 as Centennial Tower to commemorate LifeWay's 100th anniversary. It was renamed Draper Tower following former LifeWay President Jimmy Draper's 2006 retirement.

Watching the tower go up years ago was a slow process, Willis said, but seeing it come down last Saturday morning was "really, really fast."

Draper told The Tennessean that people, rather than buildings, are LifeWay's chief legacy and focus. Still, he recalled fondly seeing the cross-emblazoned tower each morning on Nashville's skyline as he approached downtown.

"It was just a source of great pride and of gratitude that we would have the opportunity to have that kind of witness in downtown," Draper told The Tennessean.

Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, said the tower's demolition is among life's many transitions.

"Ministries, ministers, and institutions go through seasons of



IMPLOSION — LifeWay's Draper Tower collapses January 6 following detonation of some 600 pounds of explosives. (BP photo)

transition," Page said according to a Jan. 6 article posted on TalkCP.com. "LifeWay is certainly in the midst of a major transition in their relocation. The key is to focus on the mission and the person behind that mission."

"It is the Lord Jesus Christ who should remain our focus," Page said. "Buildings come and buildings go. Leaders come and leaders go. However, our central focus must always be on our Lord who is the Way, the Truth and the Life!"

OBITUARIES

Susan Clark Luttrell, 64, Mississippi Baptist music leader, of Ridgeland died Jan. 3 at St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson. She served as a minister of music with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and as an educator with Magnolia Speech School, Jackson APAC, and Wesley College. Susan served First Church, Coffeeville; Center Hill Church, Hamilton; Paul Truitt Church, Pearl; Oakdale Church, Brandon; Dry Creek Church in Brandon; and Wynndale Church in Terry. She also served as interim minister of music in various churches across Mississippi during her 38 years of ministry. Luttrell also directed the Mississippi Baptist All State Youth Choir and Orchestra as well as HeartSong: A Music & Worship Arts Camp, both sponsored by the church music department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. She is survived by her husband Turner, and brother Brian L. Clark (Lynn) of Madison. She was preceded in death by her parents Julian Clark and Mildred Slay Clark of Jackson. Funeral service was held Jan. 6 at Trace Ridge Church, Ridgeland, followed by interment at Parkway Cemetery in Ridgeland.

Gene Franklin Hudson, 77, longtime Mississippi Baptist pastor, died January 3 at his residence in New Albany. He was born July 1, 1940, in Myrtle to the late

Wilford Duncan and Marjorie Fowler Hudson. He was a retired pastor and carpenter, and member of Toxish Church, Pontotoc, where he pastored for fifteen years. He was a veteran of the U.S. Navy. Hudson is survived by his wife, Barbara A. Hamblin Hudson; two sons, Philip Hudson (Sun) and Scott Hudson (Jennifer); two sisters, Patsy Dunahue and Darlene Moore (Billy); three brothers, Travis Hudson, Kenneth Hudson, and Don Hudson; and five grandchildren. Funeral service was January 8 at United Funeral Service in New Albany with burial at Beulah Church Cemetery in Myrtle.

Arthur Reynold Rorheim, 99, children's ministry pioneer and Awana co-founder, died Jan. 5 in Oregon, IL. Rorheim co-founded the Awana Youth Association, originally an acronym for Approved Workers Are Not Ashamed, in 1950 while youth director of North Side Gospel Center near Chicago. Lance "Doc" Latham, his pastor at the time, was co-founder. Awana is popular among Southern Baptists along with children's ministry programs from LifeWay Christian Resources and the Woman's Missionary Union. In the U.S. alone, Awana reached 690,495 children at 10,623 churches in 2016, according to its 2016 annual report. A memorial service will be held Jan. 27 at Quentin Road Bible Baptist Church in Lake Zurich, IL.



LUTTRELL



RORHEIM

Church security: Worship center burglaries increasing significantly

FINAL IN A SEVEN-PART SERIES

By **Chester L. Quarles**
(1944-2013)
Correspondent

The burglary of worship centers has increased exponentially over the last decade. In 1953, there were only three church burglaries in my capital city. In 1983, there were 47 burglaries during one three-month summer period.

Churches are soft targets, and easy marks because they are vacant a high percentage of time. The old approach of building a pashurium on-site and adjacent to the church was a strong crime deterrent, but is rarely used as often in contemporary times except in rural settings.

Few churches have alarm systems for fire and criminal activity, closed circuit television cameras, motion detector lights, or other crime deterring electronic aids. With a minimum investment of time and effort, a thief can be home free with a valuable haul.

Many churches don't even lock their doors, leaving them open for all to worship and pray whenever convenient. Worship and the business activities of most churches are highly predictable — just pick up this week's bulletin, where announcements can assist the professional thief in avoiding anyone while committing his or her crime.

While many transient or homeless offenders simply steal food products from the kitchen areas, the most likely value-targets are computers, sophisticated office equipment, musical instruments, sound, and broadcast equipment, and even copper taken from central air conditioning units.

Since older central air conditioning units have a better grade of copper, they are more likely to be targeted than a newer unit. Some churches have been targeted repeatedly within weeks of replacing their units.

There are many approaches which can increase your security. Raise your blinds after hours. Some low-level lights may be left on after-hours. This provides law enforcement a visual access to locked properties and creates an atmosphere that is less conducive to crime.

Many churches that use a safe for storage of cash and valuable paper work place it so that the patrol officer can see it when they make their rounds. Some churches put up signs on their exterior office doors. A statement like "Records only — no cash," or "Deposits are made immediately after the service and are not on site," may deter some criminals. Likewise, a sign may actually be posted on the safe itself, claiming "We do not keep money in this safe."

Checkbooks and church credit cards should be kept in the safe, or at least under lock and key. Checks should be inventoried frequently. Burglars often steal the last check or two, hoping that the missing checks will go undetected for a good period. Never keep pre-signed checks. This is a really bad idea insofar as crime prevention efforts are concerned.

Some Neighborhood Watch programs include worship centers. Join them if you can. In some cities, police have implemented Church Watch programs. It is a good idea and if your community has one, you should actively participate. Otherwise, use the same

precautions that you take at your own home or business.

Crime prevention rules are fairly universal. If it is a good idea for your home or business, it is a good idea for your church.

There are many ways to protect central air and heating units. Lights, alarms, and cages seem to be standard fare. Many units are now placed on roofs, but this ordinarily gives the burglar more privacy so this application may well be disadvantageous in terms of crime prevention.

Many multi-story apartment communities now mount their AC units on towers, making it inconvenient and time consuming to steal the copper. Substantial steel cages can lower your theft likelihood remarkably.

If worship centers are being burglarized locally, be sure to request an interview and a security assessment from your local law enforcement agency. Ideally, you should also talk directly to the police officers or deputies who patrol your site. Listen to their observations carefully and consider their advice.

Additionally, you should encourage church members to observe the parking areas whenever they are driving by. If they see anything suspicious, encourage them to call 911 in order that authorities may investigate.

Quarles, who died in October 2013, was professor emeritus of criminal justice and homeland security at the University of Mississippi, and co-author of the book, *Crime Prevention for Houses of Worship*. Copyright 2011. Used by permission. This series originally appeared periodically in *The Baptist Record* during 2011 and 2012.

HB 1523

cont. from p.1

on behalf of our members — Nykolos Alford and Stephen Thomas — to protect them and other same-sex couples from this harmful and discriminatory law. This law should not allow state employees to withhold marriage licenses from same-sex couples."

Legislators who passed HB 1523 in their 2016 regular session and the Republican governor, Phil Bryant, who signed the bill into law, have endured withering criticism from enemies of the law including several of the state's largest newspapers.

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves of Jackson, who was nominated to the federal bench by U.S. President Barack Obama, struck down the law. A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, based in New Orleans, reversed Reeves on the grounds that no one named in the lawsuit could prove to have been harmed by the law.

The appeals court denied plaintiffs an *en banc* hearing involving all the Fifth Circuit judges, and plaintiffs vowed to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The result of that appeal was the high court's decision earlier this week not to hear the case.

Throughout the lawsuit's winding legal process, Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood, a Democrat, refused to defend the state's enactment of HB 1523. The Alliance for Defending Freedom in Scottsdale, Az., and former Texas Solicitor General Jonathan Mitchell, agreed to defend the law.

Opponents of the law, like the ACLU of Mississippi, have vowed to continue the battle to invalidate HB 1523.

CONNORS

cont. from p.2

In fact, Scripture plainly describes Christians as ambassadors of God's Kingdom (2 Cor. 5:20). Accordingly, they have responsibilities to their King and to one another.

Church membership is about identity, covenants, and fulfilling one's responsibilities. From that perspective, problem with church membership

shrink. That perspective may also help believers understand their roles inside and outside their church facilities' walls.

Connors is pastor of Eastern Hills Church in Albuquerque, N.M. This column first appeared in the Baptist New Mexican (bcnm.com), news journal of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.

YEC

cont. from p.1

"The very best thing that happened at the 2017 YEC was that so many students had an encounter with God and their lives are now changed for eternity," Lum said. "Students were challenged to walk with God daily and were shown how they can share their faith with their friends and classmates."

Lum also thanked the adults who took time during the busy holiday season to accompany young people from their churches to YEC. "They [adults] gave generously of their time during the Christmas break so that their students could have the opportunity to be impacted spiritually. I appreciate all those who prayed for YEC to have a spiritual impact on the young people who attended."

Ronnie Hill, an evangelist from Ft. Worth, was the keynote speaker and trained attendees on how to share their personal testimony with others in the local communities where they live and in the schools they attend. Mississippi native Josh Brister served as worship leader. Evangelist Gary Permenter of Columbus led an adult training session.

"I am grateful for the contributions of Mississippi College that make this a successful event every year. Parents and churches trust us to provide a safe, secure environment for their children to attend YEC, and Mississippi College plays an important role in making that happen," Lum pointed out. He also thanked the planning committee that put together the 2017 YEC:

■ Brad Van Cleave, senior executive pastor at Overflow Church, Magee.

■ Jarred Cummins, student minister at First Church, Laurel.

■ Clint Jackson, student minister at Highland Church, Meridian.

■ Shannon Slover, minister of pastoral care at First Church, Laurel.

The 2018 Youth Evangelism Challenge will be held on Dec. 27-28 in A.E. Wood Coliseum on the Clinton campus of Mississippi College. For more information, contact the MBCB evangelism department. E-mail: lbarris@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651 ext. 278.

The Youth Evangelism Challenge is supported in part by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

LAX O D O M P E A H R P H P K A L B B O Y P ;

LAX H C P J G C L B B A P M P K T P K O G C ,

A P O H C P K G C L B B L A I Q L A T B E S V H C P Q

R E H R Y Q J C L A X .

Z R C A H P A : H F P A H J - P O D C H

Clue: B = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark 1:15

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Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

The Unknown Known • Acts 17:22-34

"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God himself." Blaise Pascal

Perhaps you are more familiar with the simplified version of this quote by a 1600's French mathematician, "Inside every person is a God shaped hole that only He can fill." No matter how advanced society becomes, there is this truth—something seems to be missing inside our souls. The citizens of Athens, a very intelligent culture, knew that even with all their gods and goddesses, food and fun, there was something lacking. They were unsettled but didn't know why. To cover all their bases, they erected a place to worship the "unknown" and placed an altar before it.

Paul encountered these religious seekers and found them hungering for knowledge. They prided themselves in being opened to all ideas while never really embracing any. We would call them "Open-minded" in today's vernacular.

They only wanted to discuss things—without commitment. In Acts 16:19-21 we observe that the people wanted to hear Paul's ideas even though they sounded strange. Then we read, "...they spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new." (vs 21) That phrase stuck out because we also live in a world that seems to value only what is fresh, new and different. When searching for truth, our world constantly searches for the newest thoughts, the newest book, or even the newest diet to provide spiritual answers. People are on a quest for that one thing to fill the emptiness inside and therefore constantly search for the next thing since the last one didn't work.

It is here that we see Paul stop before an altar labeled, "To an Unknown God." Paul saw an opportunity to introduce "the known" which for centuries had been unknown to a people hungry for knowledge. They described Paul's words as "a new thought" but what they be-

lieved was new, was actually the oldest truth in the world. Because of this, Paul began his teaching with the creation of the world to set the stage for those who were ignorant of the One True God.

It is here we find sixth lesson in how to be missional: For those who are Greek, begin at the beginning! When I say, "Greek," I am referring to people who do not have a Judeo-Christian background. When speaking to the Jews in the synagogues, Paul could begin with the teachings of Jesus, for these people were well acquainted with the God of the Old Testament. But the Athenians were different. In evangelizing, we often begin with Jesus and His dying for our sins but if the people have no concept of who God, Jehovah, is, we must begin there. Paul modeled well how to reach Greeks.

While this idea seems obvious when teaching in the far reaches of the world, the truth is we are now seeing "Greeks" throughout our communities. On our

very streets are those searching through every kind of spiritual thought to fill that empty place deep inside. These in our own communities do not have a clue who God, Jehovah, is and how He created everything, including us. They search for and believe only the newest ideas. Although they hear the term, "God" they believe in a generic god suitable for all religions. In my community, I regularly see "coexist" bumper stickers which indicate a belief that there are many gods and many faiths and all are equal. This is much like the Greek philosophers in Paul's visit to Athens. We have a neighborhood mission field, Believer!

Paul did what God sent him to do. He saw an opportunity and boldly spoke the truth. Some followed while others went about their lives as if nothing had changed. Be aware, not all will respond positively to God's message. Some did follow Paul, even two mentioned by name: Dionysius, and a woman named Damaris did. Folks, this isn't just a story. These were real people who we will meet in heaven because someone explained the unknown to them and it became known. Who are you telling?

Grace is a Bible teacher and conference speaker and is a member of First Church, Clinton.



Explore the Bible

with Cyndi Grace

Jesus Corrects • Mark 7:5-15

Nearly 40 years ago, the great American poet Hank Williams, Jr. penned one of his most famous literary offerings titled, "Family Tradition." The four-minute refrain is a tribute to his late father as much as it is a personal declaration of independence from the shadows of his father's overwhelming legacy. In the final analysis, Williams, Jr. surmised his own flaws and transgressions were less his fault and more of a case of being like his dad. In his words, "it's just a family tradition." While his logic may sound like an easy justification or dismissal of his actions, it does a present a question for each of us this week: What so-called "traditions" are we guilty of personally or in our churches that have little or no redeeming value?

We meet up with Jesus and His disciples this week in the seventh chapter of Mark staring down the cold barrel of legalism and tradition at the hands of some of the Pharisees and scribes. At this point, it is imperative for us to remember the way the Jewish people were taught the Scripture in the days of Christ. The Torah (the first 5 books of our Old Testament) presented the Jewish people on how to live. Also called "the Law," the Torah was simple enough to be understood and applied by all that heard or read it.

Sometimes the Pharisees would offer commentary or helpful insight to God's

words. Where things became muddled was when leaders such as the Pharisees began to add extra conditions or rules to what God had already commanded. Their excessive regulations and instructions made it increasingly difficult to adhere to the original Torah, and were a deviation from the intent of the Scripture. Sound familiar? How many times do we in the Baptist church do the same thing?

For example; God commanded the people to avoid working on the Sabbath. This law allowed the people time for worship, rest and renewal before the work week began. The Pharisees took it upon themselves to add to the definition of the word "work." They added such stipulations as drawing water from a well or slaughtering an animal to feed your family as violations of God's word. Some went as far as to say if a mosquito was attempting to bite you, you could not swat it away because that would be considered work.

God's commands are meant for our own good. Man's rules are often time burden-

some. God's commands give us life. Man's traditions are lifeless. While others focus on the exterior of a person, God searches and deals with the inward heart of a person. The real person. In Mark 7:5 the Pharisees cannot get past the fact that the disciples did not wash their hands before they ate. As insignificant as this may seem to us, it was important to these hardened Pharisees. Why were they so adamant about the washing of hands? In short, because their

fathers, grandfathers, and relatives before them all thought it was essential. They did not have a theological leg to stand on. There basis was "family tradition."

Let me ask you: are we not all guilty of things in our worship services that are not prescribed by Scripture but rather are there because of our traditions? When churches approach a situation by asking, "What did we do last year?" or, "What have we always done?" they are on the thin ice of exalting their traditions over God's truth. When the preferences of the membership become more

influential than the word of God, you are guaranteeing failure and idolatry. I started a couple of years looking at my own ministry and the church I serve in a different light. Are the practices, teachings and approaches I strive to lead Biblical or Baptist?

I have been a Baptist all my life (it's a family tradition). However, if what I am doing as a Pastor is more Baptist than Biblical, there is a problem. Do not misunderstand what I am attempting to say. Most of what we do in the Baptist church has Biblical roots. I am afraid though, there are times when we would rather do the Baptist way (or comfortable way) over the Biblical one. When the Biblical and Baptist way are the same, there is reason to celebrate! Jesus reveals to us in Mark 7:9-12 a troubling fact: our selfish and foolish traditions hinder and even nullify the word of God.

Let this passage speak and convict all of us as we read and meditate upon it. God is more concerned with dirty hearts than He is dirty hands. I pray our unbiblical traditions will crumble at the foot of the cross. If we are brave enough to ask God to do that, maybe we can start a new tradition of confession...and that is worth passing down!

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

Bible Studies for Life

with Bobby McKay



FUNDS

cont. from p. 1

FEMA denied aid to houses of worship after such disasters as 2005's Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy in 2012

because their buildings were used primarily for religious purposes, Baptist Press reported in September.

Three small Texas churches sued FEMA Sept. 5 for access to disaster recovery funding available to other nonprofits.

According to the Jan. 2 FEMA news release, houses of worship are eligible to apply for FEMA assistance "if their facilities suffered damage from an event declared a major disaster on or after August 23, 2017, or... if they had applications pending with FEMA

[by the same date] that have not yet been resolved by FEMA."

As with funding for other nonprofit organizations, FEMA assistance for churches under the Stafford Act is limited to repair or replacement costs not covered by a loan from the U.S.

Small Business Administration (SBA), the release stated.

In order to receive FEMA funding, houses of worship must first apply for an SBA loan and either be denied or receive an insufficient amount to cover building repairs.

Just for the Record

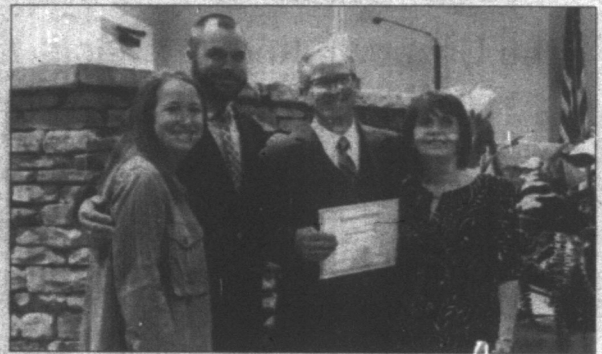


In other Church News:

> **Salem Church, Lake**, will host The Perry's in concert Jan. 14, 6 p.m. Love offering.

> **Eastside Church, Pearl**, will host the Dixie Echoes in concert Jan. 14, 10:30 a.m.

The Annie Lou Hayman Quilters of **WHITESAND CHURCH, JEFF DAVIS COUNTY**, made 12 baby quilts for donation to mothers who choose to give their babies life, donating through the Laurence County Crisis Pregnancy Center. Shown are Peggy Bass, Mary Martha Berry, Francis Bridges, Sis Douglas, Betty Bridges, and Stephenie Hayman.



WILLIAMSVILLE CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO, recently commissioned Junior and Margaret Davis to the mission field. Shown are Jennifer and Jeremy Tillman and the Davises.



The RA's and GA's of **TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL**, recognized Marshall Fitzgerald for Veterans Day in honor of his military service and service to the children. He was honored with a reception, a portrait, and a plaque of appreciation. He and Karen Fitzgerald are the RA - GA leaders. Eddie Bryant, pastor.



The children of **CALVARY CHURCH, SUMMIT**, presented their Christmas program, For the Glory of the King, Dec. 10. Farrah Alexander, director; Tammy Rayborn, Bobbie Dunaway, and Anita Alexander, assistants; Mike Burns, pastor.



The ladies and friends of **CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, have been gathering for the last 15 years to eat out and play Dirty Santa.



MCADAMS CHURCH, SALLIS, ordained Johnny Jones as deacon Dec. 10. Shown are pastor James Young, Mary Jones, Jones, and AMD Steve Jordan.



THRASHER CHURCH, PRENTISS ASSOCIATION, honored Thomas Chase during the 100 year celebration of the church Nov. 26 for 44 years of service as deacon. Shown are pastor Doug Rakestraw and Chase.



BASSFIELD CHURCH, BASSFIELD, presented their children's Christmas musical Dec. 17.



To kick off the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, **IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREENWOOD'S, WMU** made 260 teacakes which were given to the congregation Dec. 3.